

Boko Haram: Human Rights Violation in Nigeria

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Abstract

Human rights are among the essentials of democracy and good governance. They aid human beings to live a fulfilled life. And where it is denied, life becomes meaningless and hopeless. All contemporary states endeavour to ensure that Human rights are guaranteed in all their practices and are expected to uphold it in every facets of their national life. It was with the same vigours and importance that it was enshrined in the Nigerian Constitution and in the United Nations Charter on Human rights as well as in other state and non-states actor's constitutions and charters. But for some time now, the violations of these rights by many states, the terrorists and armed gangs have become obvious. In Nigeria, Boko Haram and other organizations are the archetype of human rights violation. This is the thrust of this paper.

Keywords: Boko Haram and Human Rights

Introduction

In 1995, the Boko Haram group was said to be operating under the name Shabaab, a Muslim Youth Organization with Mallam Lawal as the leader. When Lawal left the organization to continue his education, Mohammed Yusuf took over the leadership of the group. Yusuf's leadership allegedly opened the group to political influence and popularity. Yusuf officially founded the group in 2002 in the city of Maiduguri with the aim of establishing a Shariah government in Borno State under then- Senator Ali Modu Sheriff. He established a religious complex that included a mosque and a school where many poor families from across Nigeria and the neighbouring countries enrolled their children. No one knew that the centre had ulterior political goals. Soon it was discovered that it was also working as a recruiting ground for future jihadis to fight the state. The group includes members who come from neighboring Chad and Niger republic and speak only Arabic. In 2004, the complex was relocated to Yusuf's home state of Yobe in the village Kanamma near the Niger border. Yusuf successfully attracted followers from the unemployed youths "by speaking out against police and political corruption" it is also a known fact that violent uprisings in Nigeria are ultimately due to "the fallout of frustration with

corruption and the attendant social malaise of poverty and unemployment.” Some sections of the Nigerian society believe that “religious dimensions of the conflict have been misconstrued as the main source of the violence when, in fact, disenfranchisement and inequality are the root causes”. They went on to say that, there are laws giving regional political leaders the power to qualify people as ‘indigenes’ (original inhabitants) or not. These laws determines whether citizens can participate in politics, own land, obtain a job, or attend school. The system is abused widely to ensure political support and to exclude others. Muslims have been denied indigene-ship certificates disproportionately.

Meaning and Ideology of Boko Haram

Boko Haram means “Western education is a sin”. And depending on the faction, the group’s ambitions ranges from the stricter enforcement of Sharia law which is derived from the Koran as the ‘Word of God’ across the predominately Muslim north of Nigeria, to the total destruction of the Nigerian, state its government and introducing an Islamic State. Boko Haram’s grievances remain local, but it has proven itself capable and willing to attack international institutions — such as the United Nations building — on Nigerian soil to achieve their aims. The August 26 attack — during which a Boko Haram suicide bomber drove a jeep laden with explosives into the U.N. headquarters in Abuja — was one of the deadliest in U.N history. Twenty-four people were killed, including 12 U.N staff. Armed groups are all too common in Nigeria, often paid by politicians to support their bids for power, and Boko Haram at first was no different. However, the group exploded onto the national scene in 2009 when 700 people were killed in widespread clashes across the north between the group and the military. The uprising was put down, but violence has resurged once more since national elections in April with hundreds of people killed in almost weekly bomb attacks, assassinations and killings in the main northeast of Maiduguri. The elections are widely regarded by many in the north to have been rigged against the popular northern candidate. Hence it was said that a former head of state who lost the election uttered that, he will make country ungovernable for the incumbent President. There is concern that Boko Haram has made contact with other extremist Islamic groups such as al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb in northern Africa. Increasing sophistication in the execution of Boko Haram’s attacks, security experts say, indicate such external instruction. As the group moves further away from its political roots toward an increasing religious dimension, any attempt at dialogue with the group becomes more difficult for the authorities. The group has spawned an offshoot known as Ansaru. The group exerts influence in the States of Borno, Adamawa, Kaduna, Bauchi, Yobe and Kano. The United States Department of State offered a \$7 million reward to Boko Haram leader Abubakar Shekau’s capture (Abubakar Shekau is late now. He died on). On July 8th 2013, the Home office announced that Boko Haram would be banned from operating in the UK from the July 2013 onwards. The group has adopted its official name to be “the Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad” which is the English translation from Arabic. In the town of Maiduguri, where the group was formed, the residents dubbed it Boko Haram. The term “Boko haram” comes from the Hausa word book figuratively meaning “western education” (literally “alphabet”, from English “book”) and the Arabic word haram figuratively meaning “sin” (literally, “forbidden”). The name, loosely translated from Hausa, means “western education is forbidden”. The group earned this name due to its strong opposition to anything Western, which it sees as corrupting Muslims. However, this interpretation of the name is disputed, and locals who speak the Hausa language are unsure what it means.

Boko Haram was founded as an indigenous group, turning itself into a Jihadist group in 2009. It proposes that interaction with the Western World is forbidden, and also supports opposition to the Muslim establishment and the government of Nigeria. The members of the group who do not interact with the local Muslim population have carried out assassinations in the past of anyone who criticizes it, including Muslim clerics. In a 2009 BBC interview, Mohammed Yusuf, then leader of the group who stated that his belief in the concept of a spherical Earth is contrary to Islamic teaching and should be rejected, along with Darwinian evolution and the concept of rain originating from water evaporated by the sun. Before his death, Yusuf reiterated the group's objective of changing the current education system and rejecting democracy. Nigerian academic Hussain Zakaria told BBC News that the controversial cleric had a graduate education, spoke proficient English, lived a lavish lifestyle and drove a Mercedes-Benz. In the wake of the 2009 crackdown on its members and its subsequent reemergence, the growing frequency and geographical range of attacks attributed to Boko Haram have led some political and religious leaders in the north to the conclusion that the group has now expanded beyond its original religious composition to include not only Islamic militants, but criminal elements and disgruntled politicians as well. Borno State Governor Kashim Shettima said of Boko Haram: "(they have) become a franchise that anyone can buy into. It's something like a Bermuda Triangle".

Beginning of Violence Catalogue of Boko Haram Activities

7, September, 2010	Bauchi Prison Break
31, December 2010	December 2010 Abuja Attack
22, April, 2011	Boko Haram frees 14 prisoners during a jail break in Yola, Adamawa State.
29, May 2011	Yola, Adamawa State. May 2011 Northern Nigeria Bomings.
16, June	The group claims responsibility for the 2011 Abuja Police headquarter bombing.
26, June 2011	Bombing attack on a beer garden in Maiduguri, leaving 25 dead and 12 injured.
10, July 2011	Bombing at the all Christian fellowship church in Suleja, Niger State.
11, July 2011	The University of Maiduguri temporary close down its campus citing security concerns.
12 August, 2011	Prominent Muslim cleric Liman Bana is shot by Boko Harm.
26, August 2011	2011 Abuja bombing.

4, November 2011	Damaturu Attack
25, December 2011	December, 2011 Nigeria Bombing
5-6, January 2012	January, 2012 Nigeria Attacks
20, January 2012	January 2012 Kano Bombing.
28, January 2012	Nigeria army say it killed 11 Boko Haram insurgents.
8, February 2012	Boko Haram claims responsibility for a suicide bombing at the army headquarters in Kaduna.
16, February 2012	Another Prison break staged in central Nigeria 119 prisoners are released, one warden killed.
8, March, 2012	During a British hostage rescue attempt to free Italian engineer Franco Lamdinara and Briton Christopher Mc Manus, abducted in 2011 by a splinter group Boko Haram, both hostages were killed.
31, March, 2012	During a joint Task Force raid on a Boko Haram den, it was reported that 5 sect members and a German hostage were killed.
3, June 2012	15 church goers were killed and several injured in a church bombing in Bauchi State. Boko Haram claimed responsibility through spokesman Abu Qaqa.
17, June 2012	Suicide bombers strike three churches in Kaduna State at least 50 people were killed.
17, June 2012	130 bodies were found in Plateau State. It is presumed they were killed by Boko Haram members.
3, October 2012	Around 25 — 46 people were massacred in the town of Mubi in Nigeria during Night Time raid.
18, March 2013	2013 Kanu Bus bombing: At least 22 killed and 65 injured, when a suicide car bomb exploded in kano bus station.
7, May 2013	At least 55 killed and 105 inmates free in coordinated attacks on army barracks, a prison and police post in Bana Town.
6, July, 2013	Yobe State School Shooting 42 people mostly students, were killed in a school attack in Northeast Nigeria.

4, April 2014	Abduction of 206 Secondary School students at Chibok in Borno State. Boko Haram claimed responsibility.
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The group conducted its operations more or less peacefully during the first seven years of its existence. That changed in 2009 when the Nigerian government launched an investigation into the group's activities following reports that its members were arming themselves. Prior to that, the government repeatedly ignored warnings about the increasingly militant character of the organization, including that of a military officer. When the government came into action, several members of the group were arrested in Bauchi, sparking deadly clashes with Nigerian security forces which led to the deaths of an estimated 700 people. During the fighting with the security forces Boko Haram fighters reportedly "used fuel- laden motorcycles" and "bows with poison arrows" to attack a police station. The group's founder and then leader Mohammed Yusuf was killed during his time while in police custody. After Yusuf's killing, a new leader emerged whose identity was not known at the time.

Reemergence

After the killing of Mohammed Yusuf, the group carried out its first terrorist attack in Borno in January 2011. It resulted in the killing of four people. Since then, the violence has only escalated in terms of both frequency and intensity. In January 2012, Abubakar Shekau, a former deputy to Yusuf, appeared in a video posted on YouTube. According to Reuters, Shekau took control of the group after Yusuf's death in 2009. Authorities had previously believed that Shekau died during the violence in 2009. Also in January 2012, a group split away to form the Vanguard for the Protection of Muslims in Black Africa (Naka'atu ansaril Muslimina Biladis Sudan), better known as Ansaru. It has since carried out a number of high-profile kidnappings and other attacks. By early 2012, Boko Haram was responsible for over 900 deaths. In June 2012, the group claimed to be responsible for the suicide bombings of three churches in the northern Nigerian state of Kaduna, killing more than 50 people. In August 2012, Boko Haram opened fire inside an evangelical church during a severe in the Northern State of Kogi, killing 19 worshippers.

Counter-Offensive by Nigerian Government

On 14 May 2013, President Goodluck Jonathan declared a state of emergency in the states of Bomb, Yobe, and Adamawa in a bid to fight the activities of Boko Haram. He ordered the Nigerian Armed Forces to the three areas around Lake Chad to be at alert. And on the 17th of May, 2013, the Nigerian armed forces' shelling in Borno resulted in at least 21 deaths. A curfew was imposed in Maiduguri as the military used air strikes and shillings to target Boko Haram strongholds. The Nigerian state imposed a blockade on the group's traditional base of Maiduguri in Borno in order to reestablish Nigeria's "territorial integrity." On 21 May, the Defence Ministry issued a statement that read, "it had "secured the environs of New Marte, Hausari, Krenoa, Wulgo and Chikun Ngulalo after destroying all the terrorists' camps." Armed Forces Spokesman in Borno Lieutenant Colonel Sagir Musa said that the curfew that had been imposed was not relaxed with the curfew timings being 18:00 to 7:00, however there was minimal traffic in Maiduguri. On 29 May, Boko Haram Leader Abubakar Shekau, following military claims that the group had released a video in which he said the group had not lost to the Nigerian Armed

forces. In the video he showed charred military vehicles and bodies dressed in the military fatigues. While he called on Muslims from Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Syria to join his jihad, he said it in Arabic and Hausa. “My fellow brethren from all over the world I assure you we are strong, hale and hearty since that launched an attack on us. You see soldiers fleeing and throwing away their weapons like a rabbit that is been hunted down. On the same day, Nigeria’s Director of Defence Information Brigadier- General Chris Olukolade said that Shakau’s unnamed deputy was dead near Lake Chad and that two others from Boko Haram were arrested in the area. However, the military’s claims were not verified. Video clips were later released showing the bodies of Boko Haram fighters and civilians, including women and children that died as a result of the military’s fighting. The people of Maduguri were unhappy with the declaration of war on the group and instead said the issues of poverty and inequality needed to be tackled with. The US House of Representatives Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and intelligence urged the Obama Administration and U.S. intelligence community in November 2011 to focus on Boko Haram as a potential threat to United States territory. In October 2012 Human Right Watch announced that Boko Haram may have committed crimes against humanity offence that can lead to prosecution by the international Criminal Court since they began documenting these actions in 2009.

Nigeria’s former National Security Adviser, General Oweye Andrew Azazi, had worked with other African government, European and Middle East governments, and the U.S government to build cooperation against Boko Haram. He met in 2010 with then CIA Director Leon Penetta, and in 2011 with AFRICOM Commander General Ham, and other U.S official and was in the United States when the congressional panel was preparing its report on Boko Haram. He participated in a CIA conference at about the same time. After the Christmas 2011 bombing carried out by Boko Haram, President Barack Obama’s office issued a statement that confirmed that U.S and Nigeria were cooperating at a senior level against the terrorist group.

Recruiting Strategy by Boko Haram

In March 2012, it was reported that Boko Haram had taken a strategy to simulate convoys of high-profile Nigerians to access target buildings that are secured with fortification. Boko Haram has also reportedly attacked Christian worship centers to “trigger reprisal attacks in all parts of the country, so as to distract the authority so they can unleash attacks elsewhere. It was gathered that the group use the internet to propagate its activities and enhance its radicalism and circulation of extremist ideologies. Boko Haram is reportedly planning to increase its followership in many states of the federation. It was reported that Boko Haram has been involved in a recruitment drive and they are allegedly targeting Muslims between ages of 17 and 30 years, and have also been recruiting freed prisoners through prison breaks as well as recruiting child soldiers of the both sexes who are now carrying out their dastardly acts. The group is also set to assign non-Kanuris on suicide missions.

Human Rights Violations by Boko Haram

The Nigerian state is aware of the importance of human rights and incorporated it in chapter four of her constitution 1999 as amended. Under fundamental Human Rights the following are enshrined therein in the constitution; (A) Article 33-Right to Life, (B) Article 34- Right to Dignity of Human Person (C) Article 35 Right to Personal Liberty (D) Article 36 and 37 Right to Private and Family Life (E) Article 38 Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion

(F) Article 39- Right to Freedom of Expression and the Press Association (H) Article 41- Right to Freedom of Movement (I) Article 42 Right to Freedom of Discrimination. One by one, Boko Haram had violated these rights with impurity in total disregard to the Nigerian constitution and, the international Peoples and Human Rights of the United Nations. In kidnapping of Nigerians and Foreigners, rapping of innocent girls and women, wanton destruction of lives and property, etc. Boko Haram as a non-state actor do not listen or adhere to any international law and order. The international community therefore, should not question Nigeria as to what she is doing in fighting the security challenges facing the country. Human Rights Violations also occur when actions by state or non-state actors like Boko Haram abuse, ignore, or deny basic human rights including civil, political, cultural, social and economic rights of the people.

Ambassador Entwistle had this to say, “Boko Haram that mixes itself into the population and couldn’t care less how many civilians got killed, that kind of enemy is very difficult to fight”... (Tell, February 2, 2015).

Article 39 of the United Nations Charter designates the United Nations Security council or any appointed authority as the only tribunal that may determine the United Nations human rights violations. United Nations committees, national institutions and governments and many other independent bodies like, Amnesty International Federation of Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, etc, monitor human rights abuses and collect evidence as well as documentation of alleged human rights abuses. They apply pressure to enforce human rights laws. Boko Haram had involved itself with all these acts like; wars of aggression, war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide. These are breaches of international humanitarian law and represent the most heinous and serious of human rights violations by Boko Haram sect.

Boko Haram uses unsuspecting innocent girls now as agents of destruction by stripping them with bombs.

By so doing, they are violating the girl/child’s right. Instead of sending them to schools, they are being used as agents of mass destruction in total disregard of their fundamental rights.

Conclusion

According to the Guardian Sunday Newspaper (March 4, 2002), historically, Nigeria is an aberration. Anthropologically, Nigeria is a misnomer. Philosophically, Nigeria is a stable of confused quagmire. Culturally, Nigeria is a cluttered cocoon. Structurally, it is a stifling structure to its constituent units. Sociologically, it is a perfect study in incompatibility. Spiritually, it is a reject. These and other conditions created MEND, MASSOB, Egbesu Boys, OPC, and Boko Haram. But Boko Haram came and distorted things the more. It has brought unthinkable and unimaginable brutality and inhumanity to the people of North east.

In their many attacks a bombings in Yobe, Borno, Adamawa, Abuja, etc, Boko Haram had snuffed out life out of the people. This is in total violations of Article 33 of the Nigerian constitution and Article 6(1) of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.

So much so that, more than 800,000 thousand citizens has been internally displaced (IDP). The mayhem and the wanton destruction caused by Boko Haram will take another twenty years to be rebuilt or reconstructed.

Recommendations

The Sultan of Sokoto, the spiritual leader of Muslims in Nigeria and beyond, in a paid advertorial in some national dailies in the wake of Boko Haram mayhem, said the action of the group was un-Islamic and called them an “evil group”. According to him, Islam enjoins Muslims to live in peace with their neighbours (Tell, November 30, 2009). Nevertheless, it is recommended as follows:

1. It has been said by many commentators, that what is responsible for the upsurge in Islamic radicalism, especially in the northern parts of the country where religious crises have been a frequent feature of life is largely attributed to mass poverty; illiteracy and ignorance. The governments of the states in the north should address these issues and should seek the aid of the federal government where necessary.
2. Boko Haram as a non-state actor, does not respect or obey any law locally or internationally. Therefore, as a first step, it should be proscribed by the entire international community and its accounts including that of the sponsors frozen.
3. Its sponsors and leaders should be tried by the international criminal court for killing and probably genocide against Christians and humanity.
4. Those individuals and groups aiding and abetting the Boko Haram insurgency should be exposed by the government to the world and arrested as well to give account of their role in destabilizing the country.
5. The Nigerian government should do all it takes to bring back the Chibok girls. April 14, 2015 will make it a year since the girls were kidnapped.
6. The international community and the friends of the nation should wholehearted come out and support the country in its efforts to root out the scourge of Boko Haram insurgency in the country and the entire West African sub-region.
7. Nigeria should not hesitate to seek aids/arms from anywhere in the world if her traditional allies are refusing to do so to fight and defeat Boko Haram sighting human rights. With your money you have a choice.

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